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OTAHEITE

POEM.

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POEM.

Venient annis

Secula seris, quibus Oceanus

Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens

Pateat Tellus, Tiphysque novos

Detegat orbes.

SENECA in MED.

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OTAHEITE.

RESTOR'D in Safety to his native Soil
From hazardous Empriſe and glorious Toil,
Each ſea-beat Wand'rer triumphs to ſurvey
His Labours paſt, and meaſures back the Way;
From Shore to Shore the weary Bark purſues,
And ev'ry Care and ev'ry Joy reviews.

But chief th' advent'rous Friends with Rapture glow,
And trace each Scene of Tranſport or of Woe;
Each happier Hour that Health and Life ſupplied
For future Toils and Perils yet untried:
Each fatal Moment when one common Doom
Hung threat'ning o'er and mark'd them for the Tomb!
Now, where Batavia's noxious Climes exhale
Diſeaſe and Death in ev'ry tainted Gale;
Now, on ſharp Rocks by hoſtile Tempeſts hurl'd,
O'er the wide Limits of the Southern World;

Much

Now,

Now, tracing desart Wilds and pathless Snow,
While Life's congealing Current ceas'd to flow;
O'er their dim Eyes while icy Slumbers stole,
Froze ev'ry Sense, and lull'd the sick'ning Soul.
How exquisite the Joy, secure to cast
A Glance of Triumph over Sorrows past!
To picture Death, in many a dreadful Form,
Urging each Blast, and swelling ev'ry Storm;
Yet safe repos'd upon the wish'd-for Shore,
While fancied Tempests beat, and Billows roar!
Each anxious Friend, who deem'd with fruitless Care
His Vows prefer'd, and Heav'n averse to Pray'r;
With Transport, by the bursting Tear express'd,
Clasps them impatient to his swelling Breast;
Asks on what Clime their shatter'd Bark was thrown,
What Worlds discover'd, and what Oceans known:
Now, what enchanting Fair, with wanton Smiles,
Shone forth the Venus of the Southern Isles:
Now, what stern Race they met of savage Might,
In Peace their Manners, and their Force in Fight.

Much

Much of their Search through Nature's boundleſs Reign
The Sons of Science aſk, nor aſk in vain.
From all the vegetable World unfolds,
All that or Air or deepeſt Ocean holds,
Their Treaſures with collected Spoils are ſtor'd,
Tribes yet unknown, and Wonders unexplor'd.

Climes, where the Sun, with unremitting Blaze,
Pours the full Ardour of his fierceſt Rays;
Regions of Ice, on whoſe deſerted Plains,
Inverting Nature's Laws, ſtern Winter reigns;
Where never Spring with genial Influence roſe,
Unbound the Glebe and thaw'd th' eternal Snows;
Patient they trod; nor ſhunn'd the barb'rous Shore,
Where ſtreams the horrid Feaſt with human Gore.

Thus toils the Sage whoſe penetrating View
Dares Nature to her inmoſt Depths purſue.
He marks how animated Life deſcends
Progreſſive, and in Vegetation ends;
Inſpects each Series through the great Deſign,
Each vital Point that fills th' unbounded Line;

Through endleſs Syſtems darts his piercing Eye,
And undiſmay'd attempts Infinity.
While the minutely learn'd, with petty Care,
Impale a Beetle, or a Moth infnare,
He to the Winds his Canvas dares diſplay
Where never Bark had trac'd the dubious Way;
Explores the Deſart, climbs the rugged Steep,
And ranſacks all the Treaſures of the Deep.
From various Manners, and from various Shores,
With intellectual Wealth his Mind he ſtores;
Sees new Ideas in fair Proſpect riſe,
And miniſters new Wiſdom to the Wiſe.

Yet Few, though Science in their Boſom glows,
Though Fame from far her guiding Light beſtows;
Shrink not, to Scenes of active Life betray'd
From learned Eaſe and the ſequeſter'd Shade.
Does Lux'ry call? The Canvas is unfurl'd;
Her Slaves ruſh fearleſs o'er the wat'ry World.
For her, Cathay its od'rous Herb beſtows,
In Perſia's Loom the gaudy Veſture glows,

Canaria's Vintage bleeds to chear her Soul,
And Java tempers high the ſteaming Bowl.
Av'rice, with Famine curs'd of ſacred Gold,
Dares to loud Winds the ſwelling Sails unfold;
Thinks for his Uſe the Gems of India ſhine,
And graſps the Treaſures of Potoſi's Mine.
Or, arm'd with foul Defence of tyrant Laws,
To ſwell his Spoils the Sword of Slaughter draws;
By Violence ſubdues, enſnares by Stealth,
And ſtrips the hapleſs Wretch whoſe Crime was Wealth.

Such thou haſt view'd, great Ganges, when thy Tide
Was wont through many a Grove unſtain'd to glide;
While Brama's guildleſs Tribes, thy Banks along,
Hail'd thy pure Wave and tun'd their myſtic Song.
Such may no Breeze with happy Gales convey,
But Tempeſts toſs them on their weary Way,
Oft as they paſs on Africk's fiery Strand,
Where Niger's Torrent rolls o'er golden Sand,
Swift, from the yawning Clouds, with vivid Gleam,
May winged Lightnings flaſh, and Cataracts ſtream!

While Atlas, that, from far, his tow'ring Head
Rears to the Sky, with hoary Winter crown'd,
Trembles, as the refounding Tempest blows,
Beneath the Preſſure of eternal Snows.

Far other Vows for thee, lamented Shade,
Far other Oriſons the Muſe had made.
Fondly ſhe mark'd thy future Paths to Fame,
And grac'd thy Nuptials with a Virgin's Name;
Preſag'd thy Son ſhould to new Honours riſe,
Great by Example, by thy Precept wiſe;
Like Thee, the right-hand Path of Virtue hold,
And gain on Wealth without the Thirſt of Gold.
Ill-fated Pair! beneath the whelming Deep,
Unknown, unhonour'd, your cold Relicks ſleep.
Accept the Tribute which a Muſe may pay,
And let your rude Memorial deck the Lay:
Here be the Boaſt to raiſe the ſacred Urn,
Intwine with Laurel, and due Incenſe burn;
To mix her artleſs Tears with others Woe,
And join that Prayer which all the Good beſtow.

Such,

Such, from the wiſer Few, is Virtue's Claim
To unreſtrain'd Applauſe and deathleſs Fame.
Whether in ſhady Scenes, retir'd, alone,
The World unknowing, to the World unknown;
Or, in the Van of Life, oppos'd ſhe ſtands
Where Vice and Folly head their countleſs Bands,
Pour in wild Riot on th' admiring Throng,
And ſweep the Noble and the Baſe along.
Such be their Claim whoſe Boſom Science warms
With kindling Ray, with letter'd Arts informs!
Whether, by Fortune, or by Choice obſcure,
They court an humble Station, or endure;
With ſilent Induſtry improve the Mind,
And treaſure Wiſdom's Precepts for Mankind;
Or if, indignant of Reſtraint, inſpir'd
With gen'rous Ardour, and by Glory fir'd,
They ſpeed their rapid Courſe from Pole to Pole,
Where'er new Kingdoms riſe, new Oceans roll.
Not their's the fatal Triumph to explore
Climes rich with latent Gems or golden Ore;

To bear, exulting, the rich Spoils away,
And curſe their Country with the baneful Prey.
Their's be the Taſk, with unpolluted Hand,
Nature's myſterious Volume to expand:
New Modes of human Life to Man diſcloſe,
And melt the Proud with Senſe of mortal Woes;
Bid the diſtreſs'd each Scene of Ill compare,
And, taught by others, their own Suff'rings bear.
If, with juſt Survey, this extended Space
Of Earth and Ocean, Clime by Clime, we trace;
What Soil ſo chearleſs but ſome Bleſſing bears,
Allays the Evil, or with Good repairs?
Elſe would Mankind each wint'ry Region ſhun,
To court th' Approaches of a ſouthern Sun;
Each rugged Hord, though fenc'd with Ice around,
Impetuous would o'erleap the frozen Bound,
Ruſh, like a Tempeſt, down their Hills of Snow,
To Bow'rs of Spring, and ſunny Plains below.
The ſable Tribes, upon whoſe languid Heads
His fierceſt Rays malignant Sirius ſheds;

Where

Where ſultry Vapours ſtop the ſtruggling Breath,
And ſcorching Whirlwinds wing the flaming Death;
Wild and impatient of the glowing Sky,
Would to cool Shades and balmy Zephyrs fly.
But partial Good the Senſe of Pain controuls,
Beneath the burning Line or frozen Poles.
The Lapland Hunter, as the Tempeſt blows,
Clos'd in his Cavern, 'midſt ſurrounding Snows,
Indulges o'er the length'ning Night of Joy;
No Labours call him, and no Cares annoy.
His Feaſt to crown, his chearful Lamp to feed,
The bloated Race of Ocean's Monſters bleed;
And ceaſeleſs ſmokes upon his genial Board
The rich Repaſt which Summer's Toil had ſtor'd.
Soon as that Morn, he views whoſe dawning Ray
For ſix revolving Moons proclaims the Day,
Strung with new Force, he wields his ſavage Arms,
And in his Haunt the ſullen Bear alarms:
Urges o'er Hills of Ice his rapid Reins,
Sweeps down the Cliff, and beats the frozen Plains.

Incred'lous

Incred'lous ſmiles of fabled Climes to hear,
Where ſhifting Seaſons portion out the Year;
Alternate, where diurnal Suns aſcend,
And Shades of Night their gloomy Veil extend.
To ſwell his Triumph, tell of Oceans croſt
Where Nations ſhiver with Antarctic Froſt.
Whoſe torpid Limbs no furry Veſtures warm,
No ſhelt'ring Roof protects them from the Storm;
Debarr'd all ſocial Commerce with Mankind,
In Ice impriſon'd, and by Seas diſjoin'd;
By chilling Winter pierc'd, by Famine torn,
And left to ſuffer friendleſs and forlorn.
Yet theſe, to artificial Life unknown,
Make Nature's Wants the Limit of their own:
No falſe Deſire, no fancied Torture feign,
Superfluous Pleaſure, or invented Pain;
Accept what Good the Hand of Heav'n beſtows,
And patient bear their Lot of human Woes.
But Fancy leads us o'er yon Iſle to rove,
The CYPRUS of the SOUTH, the Land of Love.

Here,

Here, ceaſeleſs, the returning Seaſons wear
Spring's verdant Robe, and ſmile throughout the Year;
Refreſhing Zephyrs cool the noon-tide Ray,
And Plantane Groves impervious Shades diſplay.
The gen'rous Soil exacts no Tiller's Aid
To turn the Glebe and watch the infant Blade;
Nature their vegetable Bread ſupplies,
And high in Air luxuriant Harveſts riſe.
No annual Toil the foodful Plants demand,
But unrenew'd to riſing Ages ſtand;
From Sire to Son the long Succeſſion trace,
And laviſh forth their Gifts from Race to Race.
Beneath their Shade the gentle Tribes repoſe;
Each bending Branch their frugal Feaſt beſtows:
For them the Cocoa yields its milky Flood,
To ſlake their Thirſt, and feed their temp'rate Blood:
No ruddy Nectar their pure Bev'rage ſtains,
Foams in their Bowl and ſwells their kindling Veins.
Their Ev'ning Hours ſucceſſive Sports prolong,
The wanton Dance, the Love-inſpiring Song.

Impetuous Wiſhes no Concealment know,
As the Heart prompts, the melting Numbers flow;
Each OBERRA feels the lawleſs Flame,
Nor checks Deſires ſhe does not bluſh to name.

No boding Preſage haunts them through the Night;
No Cares revive with early Dawn of Light:
Each happy Day glides thoughtleſs as the laſt,
Unknown the future, unrecall'd the paſt.
Should momentary Clouds, with envious Shade,
Blot the gay Scene, and bid its Colours fade;
As the next Hour a Gleam of Joy ſupplies,
Swift o'er their Minds the paſſing Sunſhine flies;
No more the Tear of tranſient Sorrow flows,
Ceas'd are the Lover's Pangs, the Orphan's Woes.

Thus the fleet Moments wing their eaſy Way;
A Dream their Being, and their Life a Day.
Unknown to theſe ſoft Tribes, with ſtubborn Toil
And Arms robuſt to turn the cultur'd Soil;
Through trackleſs Wilds to urge their daring Chace,
And rouze the fierceſt of the ſavage Race;

Unknown thoſe Wants that prompt th' inventive Mind,
And baniſh nerveleſs Sloth from Human-kind.
Can cruel Paſſions theſe calm Seats infeſt,
And ſtifle Pity in a Parent's Breaſt?
Does here MEDEA draw the vengeful Blade,
And ſtain with filial Gore the bluſhing Shade;
Here, where Arcadia ſhould its Scenes unfold,
And paſt'ral Love revive an Age of Gold!
Ah! ſee in vain the little Suppliant plead
With ſilent Eloquence to check the Deed:
He ſmiles unconſcious on th' uplifted Knife,
And courts the Hand that's arm'd againſt his Life.
Not his laſt Sighs the Mother's Boſom move;
She dooms his Death, her Sacrifice to Love:
Impatient haſtes her am'rous Vows to plight,
And ſeals with Infant Blood the barb'rous Rite.
Reclin'd upon her Lover's panting Breaſt,
See in his Arms the beauteous Murd'reſs preſt!
No keen Remorſe the wanton Trance deſtroys,
No thrilling Terrors damp their guilty Joys;

Nor Ties of ſocial Life their Crimes reclaim,
Nor rigid Juſtice awes, nor virtuous Fame.
On Minds which thus untaught thus darkling ſtray,
To pour the radiant Beams of heav'nly Day;
To point where Nature the great Outline draws,
Where Truth reveal'd gives ſanction to her Laws;
To bid th' intemp'rate Reign of Senſe expire,
And quench th' unholy Flame of looſe Deſire;
Teach them their Being's Date, its Uſe and End,
And to immortal Life their Hopes extend,
How great the Triumph!—But to whom aſſign'd?
What Nations riſe the Teachers of Mankind?
Their's be the glorious Title, on whoſe Shore
Returning Virtue ſhall her Sway reſtore;
Where Truth ſhall fix Religion's holy Reign,
And countleſs Vot'ries worſhip in her Fane;
Where her pure Laws a blameleſs Race ſhall guide
By Rules of Faith to Rules of Life apply'd;
Whoſe Precepts ſhall by wond'ring Worlds be ſought,
Whoſe Manners witneſs all that Heav'n has taught.

FINIS.

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